

J. F. Bienemann
A FEW WORDS ⁵

ABOUT

THE MOVEMENT-CURE;

OR,

MEDICAL GYMNASTICS.

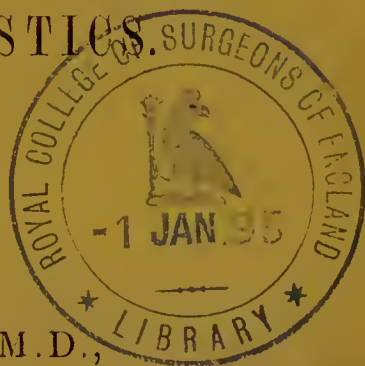
BY

J. F. BIENEMANN, M.D.,

AULIC COUNCILLOR, FORMERLY PHYSICIAN OF THE LIFE GUARD

RIFLE BATTALION OF HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY THE

EMPEROR ALEXANDER II.



BRIGHTON:

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1866.

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111

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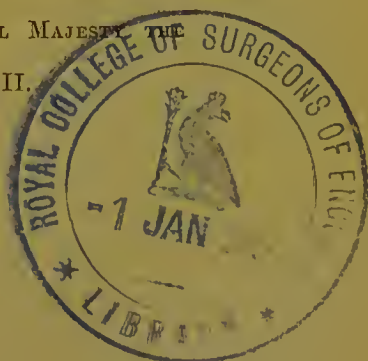
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~~COLLEGE ROAD,~~ BRIGHTON.

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How very often in life do we undervalue and overlook means of benefit,—simple, natural, and within our reach,—believing that our happiness and welfare are only to be found through the complicated, artificial, and distant !

God has planted in us the germs of innumerable faculties and capabilities, the development and right use of which are the conditions of a really healthy and happy life.

Our physical motive powers, which require but the exercise of our will, not only afford us, by their rational development and use, the means of protection from a hundred inconveniences, but also of essentially contributing to the removal of inconveniences already existing.

Man is a double being, consisting of a wonderful and intimate union of a mental with a bodily nature, and destined to activity in both ways,—to the full use of his mental and bodily powers. The sluggish in mind, and the indolent in body, long in vain for the

real enjoyment of mental or bodily pleasures. The want of activity causes obtuseness of the organs, interruption of the functions, disease, and premature death. As all our powers are increased and kept up to a healthy point by a rational use of them, so do they become weakened and completely lost by want of exercise. These are truths which everybody acknowledges, but which are, nevertheless, too often sinned against. Many concentrate their whole force on mental occupations, forgetting the claim of their bodily half. This is partly a consequence,—although by no means a necessary one,—of civilization, and the refinements of social life. Others wish only to enjoy life, without any exercise of their powers. But we cannot force our nature! And those who act in opposition to it are infallibly punished,—often severely. Especially is our bodily nature a stern vindicator of the laws of its organisation. Thus it happens, that much disease arises from merely neglecting the development of the physical powers. Consequent on this neglect, is slow and imperfect formation and renewal of bodily matter. But the thorough renewal of bodily matter is a necessary condition to the right performance of the functions of life; and it is only to be brought about by the exercise of all our faculties and powers. Neglect here has always caused much disease in the world. Well acquainted with this, medical men in all ages have represented rational bodily exercise as an indispensable condition for the preservation of health, and recovery from a state of sickness. They have recommended walking, excur-

sions, rowing, riding, fencing, boxing, working in the garden, or other strengthening exercises. But all these things are too partial, and nearly all only practicable for a few, and for a certain time only,—not for constant use by all;—and therefore these cannot be considered as affording a due balance or means of compensation. The disproportion between the claims of mental employment and professional duties on the one hand, and the requirements of the body on the other, becomes in the case of a great part of mankind more and more prominent and important in its results every day. To balance this disproportion we have the modern system of gymnastics,—as a remedy, the *curative*; and as a preventive, the *hygienic*; both belonging to *Medical Gymnastics*.

There is no universal remedy, nor can there ever be. But when the Movement-Cure is used within its true bounds, free from partiality, and in connection with the universal Medical Art, the number of cases where it has been a really indispensable remedy is by no means a small one.

Let us look at the physiological importance of the organs of motion. The arrangement of our system is calculated for full activity of *all* its parts and organs, in the exercise of our mental faculties, and our bodily powers; and we cannot neglect the exercise of our physical powers, even in order to exercise the mental, without being punished for doing so.

The whole organisation of our being depends upon the uninterrupted renewing of the materials of which our body is composed,—on the getting rid of that

which, having served its purpose, is of no more use, and the assimilation of fresh organic matter, which the body receives from the nourishment we take and the air we breathe. The more, therefore, this renewal of matter, this transforming process, is brought into action, within certain bounds, the more does the body gain in freshness, force, and durability. A *continual* renewal and revivifying of its parts is necessary. Any interruption of this process, if not remedied, causes sickness, disease, and death. Thus it happens that the insufficient assimilation of fresh matter, the insufficient throwing off of used, and therefore useless matter, and the want of balance between the amount of matter taken into the body, and the amount actually used by it, are the most general causes of irregularity in the development and working of the mechanism of our nature. But the causes which lead to a renewal of matter are themselves consequences of the activity of the physical organs in general, so long as that is in just proportion to the intervals of repose. Now the *muscular system* is by far the most voluminous of all the systems of the body, and the muscle or flesh substance belongs to those organic tissues, which by their activity (by means of a contraction of the muscular fibres) most readily allow of a transformation of their substance (*i.e.*, renewal of matter). So the active employment of the muscular system promotes the transformation of matter in the quickest, most powerful, and most complete manner; and consequently gives a natural, healthy impulse to the functions, regenerating and revivifying the blood and the juices of

the body. For as the blood is the common nourisher of *all* the parts of the body, so the reaction of muscular activity must promote the affluence of the blood in organs actively employed, and its whole circulation. It must therefore also secure the proper formation and mixing of the blood, and beneficially affect the digestion, respiration, the excretive process, and, in short, the whole organic mechanism which it sets in motion.

Hence, for the time, the heart beats more quickly, the breathing becomes faster, a genial warmth is developed, and by continuous muscular exercise the demand for nourishment is greater; there is an increase in the amount of matter thrown off from the body in the shape of perspiration and otherwise, and the sleep is more profound and refreshing. It has been shown by physiological observations and experiments, that a man in continual muscular activity completely changes the whole mass of his body in about four or five weeks; whilst a physically inactive person, under otherwise the same conditions, requires ten or twelve weeks. By active motion the muscular substance itself becomes fuller, firmer, and more flexible; and the useless accumulation of fat and flabby cellular tissues no longer takes place. Since, then, it is shewn that muscular motion is the most natural agent by which the no longer useful parts of the blood (which, without this motion, would accumulate in the body, causing disease) may be got rid of, and exchanged for new, invigorating substances, it follows that accumulations of this kind can be most readily prevented by the right use of muscular motion. It must not be forgotten,

indeed, that, to get the full benefit of these exercises, a conformable regulation of the whole manner of life is highly necessary ; but yet the rational exercise of the muscular powers will always be one of the most essential and natural of curative agencies. Indications for this treatment are the chronic pains in the abdomen so general in persons of maturer years ; with their numerous concomitant evils, weak digestion, constipation, and obstruction of the liver and spleen (of the port-vein system). Thence result headaches and so-called hypochondria and melancholy (from physical, not mental causes). The diseases incident to youth, proceeding from an insufficient or faulty formation of the blood, scrofula, &c., also evidently demand this treatment. Very essential aid is rendered to the different exercises, by certain mechanical manipulations, a sort of rubbing, shampooing, hard-stroking and soft-stroking, &c.

When administered rationally and scientifically, and as a whole, this mode of treatment is proved to be of immense value. This appears, when we look at the intimate relation and reciprocity of action which exists between the muscle nerves (nerves of motion) and the nerves of feeling. A great deal depends on a nice balance of these two parts of the nervous system, with respect to their state of excitement and activity. It should also be regarded as an important advantage, mentally, that the regular exercise of the will in perseveringly overcoming bodily laxity and luxurious ease, by a physiological necessity, strengthens the power of the will and of action in general ; promotes

steadiness and decision of character ; and gives us greater courage for the trials and struggles of this life. And thus it comes to pass that that dangerous spiritual enemy within us is overcome, which, in so many cases of chronic diseases, defies the ordinary and best chosen remedies.

Not only upon the circulation and nervous system, but also in strengthening the bones and ligaments, right muscular motion is of great service. Such results cannot be gained by any other agency. The structure of the skeleton and the position of the muscles, especially of the trunk, are such, that the degree of flexibility and tension of the muscular parts has very much to do with the carriage and form in general. A long list of complaints take their rise from a faulty room-accommodation for the organs, all-important for life and health, which are situated in the chest and abdomen. Unless these organs have sufficient room, they cannot be sufficiently developed ; and nothing can so well accomplish this first and most essential condition, as a nicely-calculated course of gymnastics, used of course in connection with attention to the general hygiene in regard of light, fresh air, &c. These, it must be understood, are ever included in a rational Movement-Cure.

Not only the curative, but also the preventive or hygienic gymnastics, are of great importance ; and especially to those of the higher classes of society who take no rightly active exercise, or very little. In cases, for instance, where walking is almost the only bodily motion of any consideration, there are

three sets of muscles, all of great importance for the whole process of life, which are neglected in their development, and may become quite useless:—(1), the muscles of the shoulders and chest, from inactivity of the arms; (2), the muscles of the abdomen; and (3), the muscles of the back,—these two from want of sufficient motion of the trunk.

(1.) The muscles of the shoulders and chest serve not only for the movement of the arms, but also for the regular distension and contraction of the coats of the chest: that is, for the process of respiration, from which depends the circulation of the blood in the lungs and the uninterrupted regeneration of the blood. For want of movement in general, but particularly of the arm and chest muscles, the breathing is weak and imperfect. We must not only try to breathe the pure air, but also to be able to get a sufficient portion of that air. *Quantity* is to be cared for, as well as *quality*.

(2.) The muscles of the abdomen, situated nearly all round between the ribs and the bones of the pelvis, serve for promoting and stimulating the functions of the abdominal organs (digestion, circulation of the juices, evacuation in child-bearing, &c.); and also for respiration (consequently for speaking, singing, laughing, coughing), and for the different movements of the trunk. The effects of a want of exercise of these muscles are therefore easily seen to be extensive and serious.

(3.) The muscles of the back serve for the extension or stretching out of the spine, and for its main-

tenance in an upright position, as well as for its side-ward movements,—that is to say, the movements of the whole trunk ; and they are also operative in the process of respiration. The maintenance therefore of an upright position of the trunk, which is dependent on the right constitution of the muscles of the back, is of great consequence, as well for the free, healthy performance of the functions of the chest and abdomen, as also in youth for the conservation of the natural form of the back and the whole body. From a want of exercise of these muscles the greatest number of cases of curvature of the spine arises, which, situated in the median line of the body, forms a universal support for the movements of all its other parts. Great activity on the part of these muscles also appears the most direct means of imparting healthy firmness and vigor to the spinal marrow, and consequently of strengthening the normal and preventing of the abnormal reflexive working of the nervous system. A vigorous spinal marrow is certainly one of the best defences against general debility, and against the multiform enemies of life,—hypochondria, hysteria, &c., &c.

Looking, then, at the general state of health of those who have but little more of muscular movement than that caused by simple walking, we are certainly not wrong in affirming that Medical Gymnastics, rightly managed, and used along with proper regimen, supplies the best, the pleasantest, and most thorough means both of prevention and of cure. It is the natural

means, in a great number of cases, which every other treatment leaves incomplete and unsatisfactory, to re-establish health and comfort.

Temperance, activity, and contentment, are the three principles of the philosophy of health and a healthy old age ; and the Movement-Cure, as it demands the first of these, and gives the second, leaves the mind free to seek the third in higher sources.

“Strive to obtain a full command over thyself to remedy thy mental and bodily defects ; begin with courage this struggle, and not without the Almighty Helper,—at whatever period of life thou mayest be, it is never too late,—and be unwearied in thy endeavours for the attainment of this true freedom, for the ennobling of thy nature ; so shalt thou, within the limits set to thy earthly career by a Higher Hand, going on from victory to victory, come nearer and nearer the end and aim of thy life.”

I have only to add, that I have prepared these pages for the press at the request of friends who have obtained benefit by this system, and who wished to have it explained to others. More or less, I have followed Dr. Schreber, of Leipzig, who has done much in Germany to extend this mode of cure.

